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Supernatural and Secular Power in Early Modern England

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Chapter 9

Sleeping with Devils: The Sexual Witch in Seventeenth-century England

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Introduction

Seventeenth-century pamphleteers commonly portrayed the female witch as a sexualized creature – one who regularly had sex with devils.[2] This image of the witch is common in historiography focusing on Continental European witchcraft but has been largely ignored in much recent English witchcraft scholarship.[3] This essay seeks to explore the sexualized nature of English witchcraft and does so by looking at all seventeenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets.[4] Although less

[1] I thank Professor Charles Zika for his thoughtful and generous comments on an earlier version of this essay.

[2] It has not always been easy to decide whether or not a pamphlet should be called a 'witchcraft pamphlet'. For the purposes of this essay, a witchcraft pamphlet is defined as a pamphlet which discusses witchcraft in depth (pamphlets that only mention witchcraft in passing have been excluded) and which is aimed specifically at a popular audience (for this reason, witchcraft treatises and sermons have also been excluded). I have also excluded possession pamphlets that do not mention witchcraft. There have been no decisions based on length. Applying these criteria leaves 50 witchcraft pamphlets.

[3] This essay is limited to an exploration of the links between female witches and sexuality. My own analysis of all extant seventeenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets demonstrates that 86 per cent of witches represented in pamphlet literature were female. This finding is in line with Alan Macfarlane's belief that 90 per cent of all English witches were women; see Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 160. For an example of the links between sexual deviancy and male witchcraft, see Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'Witchcraft and Deviant Sexuality: A Case Study of Dr Lambe', in Marcus Harmes, Lindsay Henderson, Barbara Harmes and Amy Antonio, eds, *The British World: Religion, Memory, Society, Culture* (Toowoomba: University of Southern Queensland, 2012), pp. 51–62.

[4] For reasons of space, this essay is confined to a study of seventeenth-century witchcraft pamphlets. There are between seven and 10 extant witchcraft pamphlets from the sixteenth century (depending on how a witchcraft pamphlet is defined), many of which

overt than many Continental examples, these pamphlets provide evidence of an English preoccupation with the links between witches, diabolism and sexual practices that has been previously overlooked by historians. I propose that these pamphlets depict two main beliefs about how witches and devils interacted sexually. The first involves the witch allowing her demonic (and nearly always animalistic) familiar to suck her in her 'privy parts'. The second explores the perception of the familiar as a devilish man who sleeps with his mistresses. These different interactions were divided chronologically throughout the century; penetrative acts with manlike devils appear in the pamphlets from the 1640s onwards, whereas non-penetrative acts with animalistic devils occurred most commonly in the first half of the century. An analysis of these interactions will show that witches were often portrayed as willing participants in pleasurable sexual relationships with devils. This conclusion allows us insights into concerns about illicit sexual activities, particularly in regard to women, as well as beliefs about demons and the supernatural as portrayed in seventeenth-century popular print.

The first section of this essay examines pamphlets from across the entire seventeenth century and focuses on descriptions of familiars engaging in non-penetrative sex with witches. The second section, which examines pamphlets from the 1640s onwards, looks primarily at manlike devils that were believed to engage in penetrative sex with witches. The distinction between animalistic familiars performing non-penetrative sexual acts and manlike devils engaging in sexual intercourse helps us to understand the role of the Devil in English witchcraft. Through my focus on diabolism and sexual practices I hope to highlight some of the sexual acts that familiars and devils were believed to perform and the different shapes they took whilst performing them.[5]

exhibit similar sexual and diabolical themes. For an introduction to these pamphlets, see Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England 1558–1618*, 2nd edn (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991); and Marion Gibson, *Early Modern Witches: Witchcraft Cases in Contemporary Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000). For an article which explores the diabolical and sexual nature of sixteenth-century pamphlets, see Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'The Witch's Familiar in Sixteenth-Century England', *Melbourne Historical Journal*, 38 (2010): pp. 119–36. The existence of these earlier pamphlets reminds us that concerns about female witches and devils did not appear randomly in the seventeenth century but were already circulating in sixteenth-century popular print.

[5] For more on the role of the familiar, see Millar, 'Witch's Familiar', pp. 119–36; James Sharpe, 'The Witch's Familiar in Elizabethan England', in George W. Burnard and Steven J. Gunn, eds, *Authority and Consent in Tudor England: Essays Presented to C.S.L. Davies* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 219–32; Emma Wilby, 'The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland', *Folklore*, 111 (2000): 283–305; and Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Publishers, 2005).

Before exploring the sexual dimensions of English witchcraft pamphlets, it is important to summarize the traditional historiography on English witchcraft and sexuality. In relation to witchcraft trials, Alan Macfarlane once observed that 'English witchcraft ... differed considerably from that on the Continent [because there] did not seem to be any marked sexual element'.[6] Keith Thomas shared this view and commented that the 'blatantly sexual aspects of witchcraft were a very uncommon feature of the trials, save perhaps of the Hopkins period'.[7] Like Thomas, many authors have acknowledged that English witchcraft in the 1640s involved 'a definite sexual element', while still rejecting the applicability of this interpretation to the rest of the century.[8] Both Macfarlane and Thomas focused primarily on witchcraft trials records, whereas the emphasis of this essay is on popular pamphlets. This difference in source material provides an alternative perspective on English witchcraft – one that involves sexual interactions between witches and devils. It also represents an attempt to explore the often overlooked links between English witchcraft, diabolism and sexual deviancy.

Of the 50 witchcraft pamphlets that survive from the seventeenth century, 23 (or 46 per cent) contain examples of sexualized interactions between witches and devils.[9] In 10 of these pamphlets (or approximately 20 per cent) this interaction is described as 'carnal intercourse' between a witch and a devil.[10] In the other 13 pamphlets a range of sexualized behaviours is described, the most common

[6] Alan Macfarlane, 'Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart Essex', in Brian Levack, ed., *Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology: Witchcraft in England* (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1992), p. 10.

[7] The Hopkins period refers to the period of witch trials that took place in East Anglia between 1645 and 1647 under the auspices of Matthew Hopkins and, to a lesser extent, John Sterne. These trials were characterized by unusually high numbers of accusations, prosecutions and executions and constitute the biggest witch-hunt in English history. For more on this period, see Malcolm Gaskill, *Witchfinders: A Seventeenth-Century English Tragedy* (London: John Murray, 2005); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 568.

[8] See, for example, Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 125.

[9] Nearly all of these pamphlets are anonymous.

[10] A note on terminology: it is necessary to define how I will be using the terms 'devil', 'the Devil' and 'devils', particularly with regard to familiars. I will attempt to use these terms in the same ways as contemporaries did. As such, familiars will generally be referred to as devils and more human-like devils will sometimes be defined as the Devil or a devil. Although this may at times be confusing, it is not possible to separate these terms and, in pamphlets,

being devils sucking at teats in a witch's genitalia or anus. Descriptions of devils sucking at teats on witches' bodies are part of an ongoing English belief in devils that suck at teats on their mistresses. From the sixteenth century onwards, the idea that familiars sucked blood from witches (often from teats) as part of the diabolical pact was well established in popular print.[11] James Sharpe has argued that 'by the early seventeenth century, it was generally accepted that the [witch's] mark [in the form of a teat] would be on the witch's genitals or on her anus, thus adding a sexual dimension to the relationship between the female witch and her familiar'.[12] Sharpe's argument is a relatively new one in a field that has for so long viewed English witchcraft as predominantly asexual. Sharpe reminds us that the diabolical pact needs to be reviewed and recognized for its sexual connotations.[13] This essay argues that many pamphleteers were keen to emphasize the sexual elements of English witchcraft and did so through examples of devils sucking at sexualized areas of women's bodies and descriptions of sexual intercourse between devils and witches.

In pamphlet examples of sexualized practices between witches and devils, devils take two main forms. The first is what we would typically think of as the witch's familiar – that is, a small domestic or common animal such as a rat, cat, dog, bird, toad or ferret that performs the role of the Devil. The second is slightly harder to categorize. It can best be described as a devil that resembles a man who may or may not be described as a familiar but is always demonic.

these terms are interchangeable or, in the words of Darren Oldridge, 'blurred'; see Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), p. 138.

[11] Until relatively recently the pact was believed to be foreign to England. James Sharpe and Walter Stephens have both helped to revise this view. See James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550–1750* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996); and Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 102–6. For a sixteenth-century pamphlet that explains how the pact is made between witch and Devil, see Anon., *The apprehension and confession of three notorious witches,* (London: E. Allde, 1589), sig. B1r. The only pamphlet before this date to ignore the pact between Devil and witch was Anon., *A detection of damnable drifts* (London: J. Kingston for Edward White, 1579).

[12] James Sharpe, 'Familiars', in *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Tradition*, ed. Richard M. Golden (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), pp. 347–8.

[13] This essay focuses on the sexual elements of English witchcraft and, as such, is limited to an examination of the sexual connotations of devils sucking at teats. There is also an argument to be made for the maternal overtones associated with familiars sucking at teats on a witches' body. This essay does not reject that argument, but it is not the focus of the piece. For more on the witch as anti-mother, see Deborah Willis, *Malevolent Nurture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Diane Purkiss, 'Women's Stories of Witchcraft in Early Modern England: The House, the Body, the Child', *Gender and History*, 7 (1995): pp. 408–32.

The first category of devils (animalistic familiars) is more likely to engage in sexual activity that stops short of penetrative sex. These devils perform acts that resemble cunnilingus or anilingus on witches by sucking at teats in the genitalia or anus. The more manlike devils, although they, too, engage in these practices, are more often described as engaging in penetrative sex with their mistresses. These pamphlets do not just describe the physical acts between witch and devil; they also describe the witch's willingness to participate in them and emphasize their pleasurable nature.

As well as being characterized by the involvement of different types of devils, these two main forms of sexual activity are also differentiated chronologically. The pamphlets from the first half of the seventeenth century primarily focus on non-penetrative sexual practices. These activities are visible in pamphlets as late as the 1690s but from the 1640s onwards they tend to be supplemented (and sometimes replaced) by references to witches engaging in intercourse with manlike devils. This change from familiar spirits to a mixture of familiar spirits and manlike devils represents a shift in beliefs about English witchcraft. Although familiar spirits very clearly perform the role of the Devil (and are often described in pamphlets as the Devil himself) their supplementation with manlike devils introduces a new element to English witchcraft. Throughout the entire seventeenth century, English witchcraft pamphlets portray witchcraft as demonic.[14] It is not, then, that the introduction of manlike devils suddenly makes English witchcraft diabolical. Instead, these new devils represent a change in the way in which diabolical English witchcraft is portrayed.

Seventeenth-century witchcraft pamphlets have long been established as a valuable source for witchcraft studies.[15] In the words of Alan Macfarlane, pamphlets are 'a vital and reliable source, [which provide] otherwise inaccessible material and correct the somewhat narrow impression of witchcraft prosecutions given by indictments'.[16] Lyndal Roper has gone further than this and argued that witchcraft trials are one of the few places in the early modern world in

[14] There are only two pamphlets from the seventeenth century that fail to link witchcraft with diabolism. These are Anon., *A Magazine of Scandall or, A heape of wickednesse of two infamous ministers, consorts, one named Thomas Fowkes of Earle Soham in Suffolk, convicted by law for killing a man, and the other named Iohn Lowes of Brandeston, who hath beene arraigned for witchcraft* ... (London: for R.H., 1642); and Anon., *Strange and wonderful news from Yowel in Surry giving a true and just account of one Elizabeth Burgiss, who was most strangely bewitched and tortured at a sad rate* ... (London: Printed for J. Clarke, 1681).

[15] Macfarlane, 'Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart Essex', pp. 7, 8, 18; and Marion Gibson, *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 6.

[16] Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, p. 86.

which women 'speak' and allow their voices to be heard.[17] Through the work of mainly anonymous male pamphleteers, these narratives were incorporated into popular pamphlets and designed to appeal to a popular market. As well as providing a rare, if limited, insight into female narratives, witchcraft pamphlets also provide us with an understanding of the type of witchcrafts that different pamphleteers were keen to emphasize. The emphasis by many pamphleteers on illicit, demonic sexuality presented witchcraft pamphlets as a genre of literature that portrayed English witches as sinful, demonic women. This understanding of witchcraft would have circulated widely in England given the presence of chapmen, the custom of reading aloud and not insignificant rates of literacy.[18] Witchcraft pamphlets can be viewed, therefore, as a genre that helped to spread an understanding of English witchcraft as sexualized and diabolical.

Sex with Devils: Cunnilingus, Anilingus and Other Sexual Practices

Between 1612 and 1635 six popular witchcraft pamphlets were printed in England, as far as can be judged from surviving texts.[19] Five of these describe

[17] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 20.

[18] David Cressy has estimated that at the accession of Elizabeth I, 20 per cent of men and 10 per cent of women were literate: that is, able to sign their name. See David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 176. Others have labelled these statistics as an underestimate, perhaps a very large one. See, for example, Keith Thomas, 'The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England', in Gerd Baumann, ed., *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 103; Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 22; and Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 58.

[19] These six pamphlets are: Anon., *The Witches of Northampton-shire* (London: Printed by Tho. Purfoot, 1612; Thomas Potts, *The wonderfull discouerie of witches in the countie of Lancaster* (London: Printed by W. Stansby, 1613); Anon., *Witches Apprehended, Examined and Executed* (London: for Edward Marchant, 1613); Anon., *The Wonderful Discoverie of the Witchcrafts of Margaret and Phillip Flowers* (London: Printed by G. Eld, 1619); Henry Goodcole, *The wonderfull discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer a Witch* (London: Printed for William Butler, 1621); Anon., *Witchcrafts Strange and Wonderfull* (London: Printed by M.F., 1635). A seventh pamphlet was published in 1628 about a male witch, Doctor Lambe. This essay focuses on female witches so an analysis of how Dr Lambe was portrayed as a diabolical and sexualized witch has not been included. For a study of Dr Lambe as a sexually deviant witch, see Millar, 'Witchcraft and Deviant Sexuality', pp. 51–62.

familiars sucking the thighs or the 'secret' parts of their female mistresses. These examples are remarkably similar but some are more explicit than others. The 1619 pamphlet about accused witch Margaret Flower, for example, claims that Margaret's white dog familiar 'sucked ... within the inward part of her secrets'.[20] This lewd language depicts the witch as engaging in sexually explicit behaviour with her devil and is typical of the other six pamphlets from this period. Although these pamphlets do not explicitly refer to sex with the Devil, they do appear to describe cunnilingus between a witch and her demonic spirit. Geoffrey Quaife has argued that non-penetrative sex as a general practice may have been extremely common during the early modern period. Although Quaife's study focuses on Somerset specifically, his conclusions allow us an insight into sexual practices in England more broadly. When attempting to reconcile low birth rates with a lack of contraception, Quaife argues that 'heavy petting' may have become 'an end in itself' rather than a precursor to intercourse.[21] He also suggests that digital penetration may have sometimes been preferred to penetrative sex and cites a number of assaults in which men only digitally penetrated their victims.[22] Jean-Louis Flandrian, when looking at the French context, also suggests that men and women commonly engaged in non-penetrative sexual acts outside of marriage and believes that many men and women would have engaged in oral sex.[23]

From the very early years of Christianity many Church writers forbade both oral and anal intercourse since these acts, in the words of Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–230), encouraged pleasure and not the 'chaste and controlled' begetting of children.[24] Although Clement took an extreme approach to moderating sexual pleasure, arguing that one should avoid sexual pleasure altogether, even during intercourse, he was not alone in his more moderate views. St Paul, writing in the first century, also advocated the control of sexual pleasure and forbade fornication (sex outside of marriage).[25] Against this background of early Christian morality non-penetrative sexual acts were viewed as 'illicit' as they did not take the form of sexual intercourse for the procreation of children within marriage.[26] Christian morality associated 'desire, arousal and sexual acts [as]

[20] Anon., *Wonderful Discoverie*, sig. G1r.

[21] G.R. Quaife, *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 169.

[22] Ibid., pp. 169–71.

[23] J.L. Flandrian, 'Repression and Change in the Sexual Life of Young People in Medieval and Early Modern Times', *Journal of Family History*, 196 (1997): p. 203.

[24] Clement of Alexandria (AD 150–230) quoted in Gail Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure in Western Culture* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004), p. 50.

[25] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, pp. 49–50.

[26] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, p. 38.

linked to sin'.[27] Augustine's approach was slightly more realistic than Clement's in that he recognized that sex was not easily approached in a 'chaste and controlled' manner.[28] Instead, Augustine argued strongly for controlling sexual desire through marriage. Marriage, according to Augustine, was a way for men and women to channel their lust into the 'relatively safe channel of monogamy'.[29]

In this way, Augustine constructed sex as an act that should only be performed in marriage for the procreation of children. Augustine's view remained the dominant orthodoxy of the Roman Church for the succeeding 1,500 years.[30] This interpretation, still circulating in the seventeenth century, 'offered a framework within which to intensify condemnation of sex for pleasure'.[31] In the eyes of Augustine, pleasure was deemed so dangerous that even sexual positions needed to be controlled, with the missionary position being the only acceptable choice as it was the least pleasurable for the woman.[32] It was not just early Church fathers and the Catholic Church who stressed the importance of marital sex for procreation. In seventeenth-century England, sex could be seen as 'sanctified' by the Reformed Church if it was performed at the appropriate time of month and strictly within marriage.[33] Puritan authors in England also stressed that sex should be 'marital, private, tempered, neither frivolous nor spontaneous'.[34] Even after the gradual shift in English society from Catholicism to Protestantism, 'sex retained its taint' and remained associated with sin, particularly when performed outside marriage.[35] When writing on sexual activity in England, Keith Thomas has argued that the Tudor and Stuart period 'saw a growing idealisation of married love and domestic life'.[36] This belief in England in the sanctity of marriage, shared by both Protestants and

[27] Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay, *Sex before Sexuality: A Premodern History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), p. 17.

[28] Ibid., p. 23.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, p. 56.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 66. See also Jean-Louis Flandrian, *Families in Former Times: Kinship, Household and Sexuality*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 162–3.

[33] James Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 77.

[34] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, p. 98.

[35] Phillips and Reay, *Sex before Sexuality*, p. 38.

[36] Keith Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery: The Act of 1650 Reconsidered', in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas, eds, *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Seventeenth-Century History Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 259.

Catholics alike, strengthened attempts to safeguard family life against sexual deviance.[37] These concerns about marriage and sexual deviance are visible in many seventeenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets.

Although both sexes were prone to the dangers of pleasure and sexual transgression, many argued that women were in much more danger of being corrupted by sexual desire.[38] The sexually lascivious woman is a common trope throughout history and one that is often tied to witchcraft, particularly in the European context.[39] This trope is deployed in seventeenth-century English witchcraft pamphlets. These pamphlets portray female witches as engaging in illicit, pleasurable sex that is not for the purposes of procreation. Many of these witches were single, unmarried or widowed women. Brian Levack has argued that:

> ... the single status of many witches contributed at least indirectly to their plight. In a patriarchal society, the existence of women who were subject neither to father nor husband were a source of concern, if not fear, and it is not unreasonable to assume that both the neighbours who accused such women and the authorities who prosecuted them were responding to such fears.[40]

Levack goes on to suggest that many of these same accusers might believe that single women were more likely than married women to be seduced by a devil impersonating a man.[41] The unmarried status of many English witches only furthered fears about illicit sexual activity, and these fears were developed by many pamphleteers in their depiction of female witches as sinful women who entered into sexual relationships with devils.

In representing witches as sexual beings, pamphleteers drew on a long tradition of associating sexually promiscuous women with sin and forbidden acts. Although the number of acts viewed as 'illicit' had contracted somewhat by the seventeenth century, many sexual practices (including fornication)

[37] Ibid.

[38] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, p. 51.

[39] The most famous example of this link can be seen in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, which argued that 'all witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable'; see Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Question One, Part Six (1486), p. 188. This tract was sanctioned by the bull of Pope Innocent VIII (1484), which reminded readers that women gave in easily to sexual temptation and were prone to sexual depravity.

[40] Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2006), pp. 155–6.

[41] Ibid., p. 156.

still remained taboo in the eyes of English authorities.[42] The Commonwealth (Adultery) Act (1650) represented an attempt by the English state to 'put the full machinery of the state behind the enforcement of sexual morality'.[43] It also represented a move from punishing sexual deviance within the Church courts to making it a secular crime.[44] The terms and implications of this act are mostly explained by the year it was passed: it was a year after Charles I's execution but some years after the abolition of episcopacy by the Long Parliament, and the bishops' courts and archdeacons' courts were no longer in existence. Under this act, fornication was punishable by three months' imprisonment and a good behaviour bond for a further year.[45] The most serious crime, however, was adultery for which women could be given the death penalty.[46] Crucially, the act defined adultery as an act performed by a married woman; a married man who performed the same act was only guilty of fornication.[47] As Hawkes reminds us, 'women who expressed their sexuality outside of marriage, especially if they were married, were considered the most socially dangerous individuals'.[48] Most of the witches in witchcraft pamphlets are engaging in fornication, rather than adultery. The pamphleteers' focus on witches' rejection of sexual norms positions witches as dangerous, sinful and anti-social women. Sexual practices such as cunnilingus and fornication were incorporated into popular witchcraft print and portrayed as even more unnatural through the substitution of man and woman with Devil and witch. Not only were these witches engaging in illicit sexual acts, they were engaging in them with the Devil and enacting the ultimate rejection of Christian society.

Returning to the pamphlets, we find that the most explicit example of oral sex from the first half of the seventeenth century is one published in 1621 about

[42] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, pp. 38, 41.

[43] Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery', p. 257.

[44] Ibid., p. 264.

[45] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, pp. 38, 41.

[46] Keith Thomas has explained that penalties for adultery were rarely enforced and, by 1660, the Act had lapsed. Despite its lack of influence (and the fact that it was created during the Interregnum and, therefore, at an unusual point in England's history), this act represents an attempt by the English state to control sexual behaviour to a degree that had never before been tried. Although controversial, part of the reason for the enactment of the act was public pressure, visible in the form of petitions for harsher penalties on sexual deviancy. See Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery', pp. 257–8; 278 and 276–7.

[47] Ibid., p. 261.

[48] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, p. 99.

the supposed witchcrafts of the spinster Elizabeth Sawyer.[49] This pamphlet is structured as a question-and-answer interrogation which allows the reader to feel that they are hearing Elizabeth's version of events. Elizabeth's testimony, mediated through a male author, allows us an insight into the types of witchcraft beliefs circulating in popular print. Elizabeth tells her interrogator (a minister called Henry Goodcole who is also the author of the pamphlet) that her devil 'alwayes [appeared] in the shape of a dogge, and of two collars, sometimes of blacke and sometimes of white'.[50] Goodcole asks Elizabeth: 'Whether did you pull up your coates or no when the Divell came to sucke you?' Elizabeth replies, 'No, I did not, but the Divell would put his head under my coates, and I did willingly suffer him to do what hee would.'[51] Goodcole here has introduced a decidedly sexualized element into Elizabeth's narrative. Tellingly, Elizabeth has not initiated this relation of sexual practice. Goodcole's leading question suggests that at least some pamphleteers believed that sex was a normal element of witchcraft and interaction with the Devil. Goodcole's question about Elizabeth's coats reflects typical ideas about sexual practice during the early modern period. Quaife has suggested that when engaging in illicit sexual practices it was most common for a woman to simply pull up her dress to expose her lower body rather than for her to undress entirely. This, Quaife argues, was because of the nature of women's dress; the laced bodices worn by most women during this time made it more difficult to access a woman's upper body than her lower half.[52] In the above description, Goodcole seems to be drawing on this tradition. Goodcole is also following a formulaic practice of how to describe sexual acts in a legal setting. Laura Gowing has commented on the formulaic way in which many early modern witnesses described sexual acts. She describes the phrase 'taking up her coats' as one euphemistic and less embarrassing way for witnesses, particularly women, to describe sexual activity.[53] Elizabeth, however, denies lifting up her skirts despite her testimony that she let the Devil do what he wanted. Elizabeth could, perhaps, be trying to demonstrate an initial reluctance to engage in sexual activity with a devil. As we see from the rest of Elizabeth's testimony, however, this reluctance is described as being quickly overcome. The

[49] For an exploration of this pamphlet in the context of the play *The Witch of Edmonton*, see the essay by Victoria Bladen at Chapter 4 in this volume.

[50] Henry Goodcole, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer A Witch* (London: Printed for William Butler, 1621), sig. C2v.

[51] Ibid., sig. C3v.

[52] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, p. 165.

[53] Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Sex and Reproduction in Seventeenth-Century England,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 103.

erotic nature of Elizabeth's description, coupled with Goodcole's question about where the Devil sucked her, and his formulaic phrasing, strongly suggests to the reader that Elizabeth engaged in cunnilingus with the Devil.

It is impossible to know how common oral sex between men and women was during the seventeenth century. Flandrian believes that oral sex occurred commonly in early modern culture and Edward Shorter has suggested that although oral sex was practised, cunnilingus was one of the least common forms of sexual activity.[54] Richard Davenport-Hines has speculated that oral sex may have been unappealing to many early modern people because of low hygiene standards.[55] Quaife also highlights the rarity of cunnilingus, stating instead that 'the manual stimulation of the penis, clitoris and vagina' was one of the most common forms of sexual practice.[56] More recently, Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson have also commented on premarital sexual practices. Crawford and Mendelson argue that, during courtship, "bundling", 'a night of courting, fully clothed, which stopped short of intercourse', was 'widely practised'.[57] As Phillips and Reay remind us, before the eighteenth century 'references to kissing, mutual fondling and groping suggest that many unmarried couples may well have limited their sexual activity within that frame'.[58] It is clear that premarital sexual activity was relatively common in early modern England and, although perhaps less common than other types of sexual practice (such as digital penetration or fellatio), cunnilingus was not unknown to the early modern populace. If cunnilingus was, in fact, less common than other sorts of sexual practice, then its frequent inclusion in witchcraft pamphlets seems to emphasize the unnaturalness of sexual acts between witches and devils. Of all possible illicit sexual practices it was cunnilingus, an act designed specifically for female pleasure, which was referred to, and incorporated into, witchcraft pamphlets.

The way in which the pamphleteer describes Elizabeth's sexual encounter conveys the impression that she is a willing participant. The pamphleteer relates that Elizabeth wanted the Devil to suck her (presumably in her genitalia), suggesting sexual desire. Elizabeth emphasizes this apparent pleasure by supposedly telling Goodcole that 'when hee [the Devil] suckt mee, I then felt

[54] Flandrian, 'Repression and Change', p. 203; Edward Shorter, *A History of Women's Bodies* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), p. 11.

[55] Richard Davenport-Hines, *Sex, Death and Punishment: Attitudes to Sex and Sexuality in Britain since the Renaissance* (London: Collins, 1990), p. 79.

[56] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*, p. 165.

[57] Patricia Crawford and Sara Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550–1720* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 118.

[58] Phillips and Reay, *Sex before Sexuality*, p. 52.

no paine at all'.[59] In this example there is no mention of the Devil sucking at Elizabeth for blood or any other gain. Instead, this action appears to be purely for pleasure. Historians such as Edward Shorter have controversially claimed that 'there is little evidence that women derived much pleasure' from sex within the traditional family.[60] However, there is a wealth of evidence that counters this argument. One particularly vibrant example of female sexual pleasure comes from the Persian writer Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine*, which was written in the eleventh century. From the early thirteenth century onwards, Avicenna's *Canon* circulated in the West, and Avicenna's ideas were later incorporated into many Western medical texts.[61] In the *Canon*, Avicenna stressed the need for sterility to be cured by sexual pleasure and emphasized the need to sexually excite the woman in order for conception to occur. He urged men to 'take their time over playing with women ... caress their breasts and pubis, and enfold their partners in their arms'.[62] Avicenna then went on to describe the female climax when the 'woman clings more tightly, when her eyes start to go red, her breathing becomes more rapid and she starts to stammer'.[63] This text is very clear in its description of female pleasure. In the English context, Quaife's study of sexual practice among peasants in Somerset also strongly suggests that at least some women in early modern society actively enjoyed sex and sought it out.[64] Although many Church authorities disapproved of sexual desire and pleasure, it is clear that men and women still engaged in, and sought out, pleasurable, non-procreative sexual activities. In England, 'the Church's strict sexual code was never universally observed'.[65] Thomas, for example, cites that approximately one-fifth of brides were pregnant on their wedding day, demonstrating that, perhaps not surprisingly, many men and women engaged in premarital sex.[66]

People's desire for sexual interactions outside of marriage (and perhaps the fact that it appears to have been normative practice) is emphasized in English witchcraft pamphlets. These pamphlets often portray witches as desiring their devils to sleep with them (a theme that will be discussed in the second half of this essay), suggesting that they derived pleasure from these interactions. Pamphlets

[59] Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, sig. C3v.

[60] Shorter, *A History of Women's Bodies*, p. 9.

[61] Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 130. Jacquart and Thomasset have argued for the importance of this text's influence on Western teachings about sex; see ibid., pp. 132–3.

[62] Avicenna, *Canon*, Book III. Fen 20, tr. 1, ch. 9 in ibid., p. 131.

[63] Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 131.

[64] Quaife, *Wanton Wenches*.

[65] Thomas, 'The Puritans and Adultery', p. 260.

[66] Ibid.

from 1613, 1619, 1621 and 1635 all describe witches as having teats for the Devil to suck in the 'inward parts of the secrets' or on their thighs.[67] The pamphlets from 1619 and 1621 describe these interactions in detail. Only one other witchcraft pamphlet (that we know of) was published between 1612 and 1635 and, although this pamphlet does not describe cunnilingus or devils sucking at witches' thighs and genitalia, it does describe sexual interactions between witches and devils.[68] This emphasis suggests that the links between deviant sexuality and witchcraft were of significant concern to pamphleteers. Both implicit and explicit examples of cunnilingus are present in these pamphlets. The presence of cunnilingus – a form of sexual practice designed specifically to pleasure the female - in witchcraft narratives strengthens the view that some witchcraft pamphleteers chose to portray women as willing participants in pleasurable sexual encounters. This showcases pamphleteers' ability to both highlight and demonize female desire. The suggestion by pamphleteers that the Devil practised cunnilingus on witches (or, at the very least, that he chose to suck at teats in their genitalia or on their thighs) is perhaps not surprising if we combine circulating ideas about non-penetrative sex with the belief that the Devil sucked at teats on witches' bodies. The illicit nature of this sexual practice was combined with the belief that witches entered into a pact with the Devil, thus defining them as deviant members of society.

Unlike the above example (of the Devil sucking under Elizabeth Sawyer's coats) which appears to be sexual activity purely for pleasure, the example below from this same pamphlet appears to be more functional. In the 1621 pamphlet, Goodcole asks Elizabeth: 'In what place of your body did the Devill sucke of your bloud, and whether did hee himselfe chuse the place or did you yourself appoint him the place?' Elizabeth replies:

> The place where the Divell suckt my bloud was a little above my fundiment, and that place chosen by himselfe; and in that place by continuall drawing, there is a thing in the forme of a teate, at which the Divell would sucke mee. And I asked the Divell why hee would sucke my bloud, and hee sayd it was to nourish him.[69]

In this example Elizabeth explicitly states that the Devil sucked her to nourish himself with her blood. This explanation, however, does not explain why the

[67] Anon., *Witches of Northamptonshire*, sig. D1v; Anon., *Witches Apprehended*, sig. C1v; Anon., *Wonderful Discoverie*, sig. G1r; Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, sigs C3v, B3v; Anon., *Witchcrafts Strange and Wonderfull*, sig. C2v.

[68] Potts, *The wonderfull discouerie of witches*, sigs B3r, L2v.

[69] Goodcole, *Wonderfull Discoverie*, sig. C3r–C3v.

Devil has chosen to suck at a sexualized area of Elizabeth's body – namely, her anus. These two references from 1621 suggest that the relationship between witch and devil was often portrayed as one that involved a number of illicit sexual practices. The above example from the 1621 Elizabeth Sawyer pamphlet implies acts of both cunnilingus and anilingus and furthers the argument that English witchcraft was often described in sexualized terms.

Although the 1640s saw a rise in the number of witches who were described as engaging in intercourse with the Devil, there are still many examples from this decade of animalistic familiars sucking at witches' genitalia. Elizabeth Clarke (a witch who appeared in Matthew Hopkins' tract *The Discovery of Witches*, 1647) is portrayed by an anonymous pamphleteer in a different pamphlet as engaging in non-penetrative sex with her animalistic familiars and also in sexual intercourse with a manlike Devil. Elizabeth Clarke's supposed intercourse with the Devil will be discussed later in this essay. In a 1645 pamphlet Elizabeth is said to have confessed that:

> ... there came a white thing to her in the night, and the night after a gray one, which spake to this Examinant, and told her they would doe her noe hurt, but would helpe her to an Husband, who would maintaine her ever after: And that these two things came into this Examinants bed every night, or every other night, and sucked upon the lower parts of her body.[70]

This suggestive passage presents these sexualized encounters as a ritual in which both parties willingly participate. The familiars always appear in Elizabeth's bed at night, suggesting that Elizabeth engages in regular and ongoing non-penetrative sex (most likely cunnilingus given the above description of sucking) with her familiars. Both familiars explicitly tell Elizabeth that they will not hurt her and that they will help her find a husband. Elizabeth, an elderly woman who only has one leg and lives in poverty, accepts this offer of protection.[71] In the familiars' quest to find Elizabeth a husband, however, they seem to take on part

[70] Anon., *A true and exact relation of the several informations, examinations and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex* (London: Printed by M.S. for Henry Overton and Benj. Allen, 1645), sig. A3v.

[71] As Brian Levack has demonstrated, it was not unusual for accused witches to be elderly, impoverished women. As was noted in footnote 3, witches in England were overwhelmingly female. Levack has furthered our demographic understanding of witchcraft by noting that the 'typical witch' was well over the age of 50 and, in the county of Essex, the median age of witches was about 60. In terms of social status, Levack has demonstrated that witches most often came from the 'lower levels of society' and often lived 'on the margin of subsistence'. See Levack, *Witch-Hunt*, pp. 149, 157–8.

of this role themselves in sharing Elizabeth's bed and engaging in sexual activity with her. This example does not provide us with any description of whether Elizabeth is supposed to have felt sexual desire towards her devils.

There are eight other references across 11 pamphlets throughout the 1640s of familiars sucking at witches' genitalia or thighs. Many of these are confined to two pamphlets published in 1645 but they are still present in other pamphlets before and after this date.[72] After the 1640s these descriptions of cunnilingus temporarily disappear from popular print, even though witchcraft pamphlets continued to be published. They do re-emerge, however, in the 1680s. Cunnilingus is first implicitly referred to again in a 1684 pamphlet in which the dead body of accused witch Alice Fowler is examined. Alice's body was found 'stripped, dead and cold as clay laying on the floor on her back, and having two great toes ty'd together, and a blanket flung over her'.[73] After neighbours made this bizarre discovery, they searched Alice's body and 'found in the private parts of the corps five teats ... and that they were all of them as black as a coal'.[74] The suggestion implicit in the pamphlet is that Alice's familiars sucked at these teats in her genitalia.

The belief that devils sucked witches in their genitalia is a reoccurring motif throughout the seventeenth century. Earlier pamphlets (such as those from 1619 and 1621) are more explicit in describing how devils sucked at the genitalia of witches. The above 1684 pamphlet, published in the wake of the aforementioned witchcraft pamphlets that describe cunnilingus between witches and devils, does not need to explicitly state why there are teats in Alice's genitalia. The pamphleteer seems to be assuming that his readers will understand this reference to illicit sexuality. By the 1680s, therefore, there was a strong tradition in pamphlets of witches being portrayed as women who regularly engaged in illicit sexual practices with their devils. The assumption of deviant sexuality in witchcraft narratives is perhaps strongest in one illustration from 1688. This image from Nathaniel Crouch's *The Kingdom of Darkness* clearly depicts two female witches kneeling before the Devil and performing fellatio (see Figure 9.1). This extraordinary depiction is part of a montage of common witchcraft beliefs including witches and devils dancing and feasting together,

[72] The two pamphlets that have the most references are: Anon., *A true and exact relation of the several informations examinations and confessions of the late witches, arraigned and executed in the county of Essex*; and Anon., *A true relation of the arraignment of eighteene witches* (London: Printed by I.H., 1645).

[73] Anon., *Strange news from Shadwell being a true and just relation of the death of Alice Fowler* (London: Printed by E. Mallet, 1684), p. 3.

[74] Ibid.

Figure 9.1 Title-page from *'The Kingdom of Darkness: or, the History of dæmons, specters, witches, apparitions, possessions, disturbances, and other ... supernatural delusions ... and malicious impostures of the Devil ... Collected from authentick records ... With pictures of several memorable accidents'* by Nathaniel Crouch (London, 1688). [ShelfmarkC.118.b.3] © The British Library Board

witches conjuring devils from a magic circle and witches riding to the Sabbath.[75] The placement of the sex act is prominent. The witches' kissing of the Devil's genitals, as well as having very clear sexual overtones, could also be viewed as a reversal of the obscene kiss in which, in parts of Continental Europe, the witch kisses the Devil's backside. This illustration is, to my knowledge, the only depiction of fellatio in an English witchcraft pamphlet and it appears to have been overlooked by historians. Its inclusion on the cover of a late seventeenth-century witchcraft book demonstrates that at least some pamphleteers viewed witchcraft as strongly associated with deviant, diabolical sex and that this interpretation of witchcraft was being circulated in English print.

There are only two more surviving seventeenth-century references to cunnilingus, both of which appear in a pamphlet from 1690. In this pamphlet Margaret Landish, a witch accused of killing a child, confesses that 'her imps did usually suck two teats near the privy parts'.[76] Two of the other witches in this pamphlet, Susan and Rose, are also accused of having teats. Women searching Susan and Rose claimed to find 'several large teates in the secret parts of their bodies' which both witches adamantly denied at trial.[77] Throughout the seventeenth century, descriptions of witches having teats in their genitalia or anus appear in 13 of all 50 surviving witchcraft pamphlets. This is a significant percentage and one that forces us to reconsider the paradigm of English witchcraft as asexual. When the evidence of these 13 pamphlets is combined with the 10 other pamphlets that portray witches as engaging in sexual intercourse with devils, it becomes clear that there is a decided sexual undertone to English witchcraft pamphlets. Both groups of pamphlets attempt to link witchcraft, sexual deviancy, female sexual desire and the diabolical.

[75] Although the Sabbath is often viewed as a belief more common in European witchcraft, there is compelling evidence for the presence of this belief in England. Until very recently most English witchcraft historians viewed the Sabbath as a Continental phenomenon. For an alternative perspective, see James Sharpe, 'In Search of the English Sabbat: Popular Conceptions of Witches' Meetings in Early Modern England', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 2 (2013): pp. 161–83; and Charlotte-Rose Millar 'The Witchcraft Confederacy' in Michael Pickering and Julie Davies, eds, *A World Enchanted: Magic and the Margins* (Parkville: Melbourne Historical Journal Collective, forthcoming 2014).

[76] Anon., *The full tryals, examination and condemnation of four notorious witches* (London: Printed by J.W., 1690), p. 4.

[77] Ibid., p. 6.

Sex with Devils: Intercourse and Pregnancy

From the 1640s onwards the focus of pamphlets shifts from non-penetrative sexual acts to accusations of witches having sex with devils. On 25 March 1645 Elizabeth Clarke allegedly confessed to Matthew Hopkins that she:

> ... had carnall copulation with the Devill six or seven yeares; and that he would appeare to her three or foure times in a weeke at her bed side, and goe to bed to her, and lye with her halfe a night together in the shape of a proper Gentleman, with a laced band having the whole proportion of a man, and would say to her, *Besse I must lye with you*, and she did never deny him.[78]

An analysis of this passage, and the surrounding pages, provides an insight into the sexualization of English witchcraft and the way in which this sexualization was described in terms that assume women experienced sexual pleasure. As in Elizabeth Clarke's earlier interactions with her familiars who regularly visited her in her bed, this sexual relationship between Elizabeth and the Devil seems to have taken on an ongoing and routine-like quality. Elizabeth's description of sex with the Devil is not forceful or aggressive; rather, it is almost affectionate. She relates what is evidently a routine that has continued for several years and one that seems to be marked by mutual desire. The Devil's continual appearance at Elizabeth's bedside, and his statement that he 'must' lie with Elizabeth, suggests sexual desire. This is apparently reciprocated by Elizabeth as she is reported as saying that she 'never' denied the Devil, not that she 'couldn't'. She appears to respect her devilish partner, as she is keen to describe him as a 'proper Gentleman'. Similarly, the Devil's shortening of Elizabeth's name to 'Bess' is suggestive of affection or, at the very least, familiarity. This example echoes the construction of Elizabeth Sawyer's relationship with her demonic spirits in Goodcole's 1621 pamphlet, as both witches appear to feel sexual desire towards their devils. By highlighting the witches' desire in these examples, both pamphleteers are stressing the sinful nature of the encounter. As Kim Phillips and Barry Reay remind us, for some Christian writers 'the very act of sexual arousal was tainted by sin'.[79] Not only are both of these witches described as choosing to join with the Devil, but they are also portrayed as engaging in pleasurable, non-marital sexual encounters with Satan. This intersection between illicit sexual desire and

[78] Anon., *A true and exact relation*, p. 2.

[79] Phillips and Reay, *Sex before Sexuality*, p. 19.

the demonic presents female witches as deviant beings who are ungoverned by normal societal and sexual rules.

It is worth speculating, briefly, on the 1645 description of the Devil possessing 'a laced band having the whole proportion of a man'. This description does not appear in any other witchcraft pamphlet and could be referring to a dildo or dildo-like object. The phrase 'having the whole proportion of a man' has phallic implications and the context of the description in a passage about diabolic sex strengthens this interpretation. Unfortunately, the pamphlet does not provide any more information on the purpose of this band or any other clues that could tell us more about its specific function.

There are several other examples of witches sleeping with devils both from the 1640s and beyond. A second pamphlet of 1645 describes the arraignment of 18 witches and claims that there are '120 more suspected witches in prison at St. Edmunds-bury'.[80] Of these witches we are told that:

> ... some have confessed that they have had carnall copulation with the Devill, one of which said that she had (before her husband dyed) conceived twice by him, but as soon as she was delivered of them they ran away in most horrid long and ugly shapes.[81]

This passage provides a sense of an ongoing sexual relationship between witch and Devil – one that persisted long enough to result in two, albeit misshapen, children.[82] The unnamed witch in this pamphlet expresses clear sentiments towards her demonic children. She describes them as 'horrid' and 'ugly', demonstrating an almost tangible repulsion of these deformed children. They are not described as animals, devils or humans but simply as formless 'shapes'. The witch's description of these repulsive shapes running from her inverts traditional maternal feelings towards newborns and emphasizes their inhuman nature.

[80] Anon., *A true relation of the arraignment of eighteene witches*, p. 5.

[81] Ibid. These deformed births could act as markers of sin. Monstrous births and wonders were often viewed as signs from God warning mankind to mend their sinful ways. The notion here that sex between women and devils leads to deformed children is reminiscent of this idea and reinforces the impression that these women, through their sexual desire, have sinned. For more on monstrous births, wonders and sin, see Jennifer Spinks, *Monstrous Births and Visual Culture in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), particularly pp. 93–4, 97, 137 and 141.

[82] As Stuart Clark reminds us, whether or not the Devil could father children was an ongoing debate amongst early modern theologians and witchcraft writers. Many writers believed it to be impossible. See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 190.

Descriptions of witches falling pregnant to their demonic lovers open up another way of understanding narratives of sexual relationships between witches and their devils, and the emotions generated and sustained by them. Until the end of the seventeenth century the majority of writers held that sexual pleasure was necessary for conception.[83] Some writers even stressed that for a child to be conceived quickly, simultaneous orgasm was necessary.[84] Gail Hawkes has argued that even though many medical authors wrote about female pleasure and conception, they tailored these descriptions to minimize the amount of pleasure necessary to ensure conception.[85] Many of these authors reiterated the concerns of many early Church writers about illicit positions, stressing that the 'missionary position' was the only licit choice.[86] In this way, the medical profession's focus on orgasm was not on pleasure for pleasure's sake but on its health-giving qualities and its role in procreation.[87] This understanding of sex and procreation suggests that relationships in which witches believed they had fallen pregnant to the Devil (or were portrayed in such terms) were understood as pleasurable interactions.

The above instance of demonic pregnancy is not an isolated example. Fewer than 10 years later, two witches in a second case of demonic pregnancy are keen to refute any suggestion that the Devil disgusted or hurt them. On the first page of a 1652 pamphlet, Anne Ashby (alias Cobler) and Anne Martyn confessed 'that the Devill had known them carnally, and that they had no hurt by it'.[88] The mention of a lack of harm suggests that the questioner expects the witches to have been damaged by consorting with the Devil and that both witches wish to correct this view.[89] The judge then pronounces both witches guilty, and they react by pleading 'that they were with child pregnant, but confessed it was not by any

[83] Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Longman, 2004), p. 59.

[84] Ibid., p. 58.

[85] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, pp. 81–4.

[86] Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*, p. 134.

[87] Hawkes, *Sex and Pleasure*, pp. 80–81.

[88] Anon., *A Prodigious and Tragicall History* (London: Printed for Richard Harper, 1652), p. 3.

[89] There was a debate in early modern Europe concerning the pleasurable or painful nature of demonic copulation. Some authors, like Nicolas Rémy, believed that sex with the Devil must be painful. This is perhaps why some questioners were interested in whether or not witches were hurt by their encounters with the Devil. See Nicolas Rémy, 'That Demons Lie with Men, but in a Manner which is Cold, Joyless, Vain and Barren' in, *Demonolatry* (1595).

man, but by the Divell'.[90] These women appear to be trying to use pregnancy to avoid being hanged. Patricia Crawford has argued that many women were aware of theories concerning conception and would have 'had reason to believe that any pleasurable heterosexual genital contact could lead to pregnancy'.[91] The fact that these women appear to imagine that they are pregnant by the Devil suggests that they viewed their demonic liaisons as similar to other sexual relationships – that is, in terms of a pleasurable sexual interaction that could lead to pregnancy. Their description of being 'with child' by the Devil lacks any of the repulsion of the 1645 example, demonstrating the differing ways in which witches may have viewed their demonic liaisons.

Many historians have argued that these accounts of sexual liaisons between witches and devils were only produced (or at least to any noteworthy degree) during the 1640s.[92] This is part of a broader historiography that persists in seeing the witch beliefs of the 1640s as an 'aberration' in English witchcraft beliefs more generally.[93] Walter Stephens, for example, has claimed that 'there was only one period when accusations of demonic copulation were prevalent in England: between 1644 and 1647'.[94] However, sexual interactions between witches and devils were present in pamphlet literature from the early years of the seventeenth century and continued throughout the entire century. I agree with Stephens that pamphlets from the 1640s do contain more references to sexual intercourse between witches and devils than pamphlets from previous decades. However, as this essay has argued, a number of sexual practices such as cunnilingus and anilingus are visible in pamphlets throughout the first four decades of the seventeenth century. There is a divide between these earlier pamphlets, which showcase animalistic familiars engaging in non-penetrative sex with witches, and those of the 1640s and beyond, which tend to focus on manlike devils engaging in penetrative sex with witches. However, these sexual practices, although varied, introduce the same element of sexualization into English witchcraft narratives independent of the exact form they take. It does not seem helpful, therefore, to suggest that these references in the 1640s were atypical of the wider

[90] Ibid., p. 4.

[91] Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families*, p. 64.

[92] See, for example, Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 568, Reay, *Popular Cultures in England*, p. 125; and Philip Almond, *The Witches of Warboys: An Extraordinary Story of Sorcery, Sadism and Satanic Possession* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), p. 101.

[93] Malcolm Gaskill, 'Witchcraft, Emotion and Imagination in the English Civil War', in John Newton and Jo Bath, eds, *Witchcraft and the Act of 1604* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 164. Gaskill here is summarizing the traditional view of the Matthew Hopkins trials in the 1640s.

[94] Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, p. 102.

century. Sharpe has convincingly argued that during the 1640s 'in the actual content of the witch beliefs that surfaced ... there was much more which was familiar than unfamiliar'.[95] As this essay demonstrates, sexualized references are present throughout pamphlet literature across the entire seventeenth century and are not localized to one particular decade. Pamphlets from the second half of the century – many of which have not been analysed in depth by historians – continue this theme and often describe witches engaging in intercourse with devils. These pamphlets tend to focus on manlike devils engaging in penetrative sex with witches.

The first of these examples comes from 1650. In this pamphlet Margaret White begins by describing herself as 'the Divels servant' and relates how:

> ... the divell came to her in the likenes of a man in blew cloaths, in her owne house, and griped her fast by the hand, and told her she should never want, and gave her a nip on the shoulder, and another on her back ... and that the Divell had carnall knowledge of her in her owne house two severall times.[96]

It is important to look at the context of this passage in order to properly understand it. The next line in the pamphlet is particularly helpful. Margaret claims that, 'Mrs Swinow, and her sister Jane, and her selfe were in the Divels company in her sister Janes house, where they did eate and drinke together ... and made merry'.[97] This statement presents the Devil as Margaret's ongoing sexual partner who accompanies her to intimate social events and dinners. The Devil here appears to be interested in entering into a relationship with Margaret that involves regular, ongoing sex and is not simply based on forcing or tricking her. The Devil's gripping of Margaret's hand could be understood as a reassuring gesture, particularly in the context of the Devil telling Margaret that she 'should never want'. From this perspective, the 'nips' on Margaret's shoulder and back could be interpreted as playful gestures. Although Margaret does not explicitly state how she feels towards the Devil, the above context would suggest that there is a mutual affection between witch and devil and that Margaret is a willing participant in the liaison. Albeit less explicitly, Margaret is being portrayed in the same way as Elizabeth Sawyer and Elizabeth Clarke, two witches who were

[95] James Sharpe, 'The Devil in East Anglia: The Matthew Hopkins Trials Reconsidered', in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts, eds, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 249.

[96] Anon., *Wonderfull Newes from the North* (London: Printed by T.H., 1650), p. 24.

[97] Ibid.

described as experiencing sexual desire in their interactions with their devils. Although this pamphleteer does not describe Margaret's desire for her devil, he does choose to portray them as a couple who both choose to engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Margaret is being described as yet another witch who allows her sexual appetites to drive her actions.

The last seventeenth-century examples of demonic sex come from the 1680s. During this decade three highly sexualized pamphlets were published, all concerning the same three witches: Susanna Edwards, Mary Trembles and Temperance Lloyd.[98] All three of these witches were accused of sleeping with the Devil, but the pamphleteers pay particular attention to Temperance's sexual interactions with devils. Temperance confesses that the Devil sucked at her 'Paps' to 'provoke her to letchery'.[99] Due to the supposed importance of orgasm to conception, medical tracts often described how to successfully arouse a woman. One English text, from the 1630s, claimed that when their husband came to them in bed, women 'ought to be prepared for sweet embraces with lascivious words mixed with lascivious kisses'.[100] The author goes on to argue for the importance of foreplay because 'if the man is quicke and the woman too slow, there is not a concourse of both seeds at the same instant as the rules of conception require'.[101] Although this example stresses the importance of foreplay and sexual pleasure, it is advocating pleasure strictly for procreative purposes. In the example of the Devil arousing Temperance, there is no indication that this is an act that is aimed at the procreation of children rather than just for pleasure. Moreover, it does not take place within marriage, thus furthering its illicit nature. After the Devil aroused Temperance, he 'lay carnally with her for nine nights together'.[102] As in the examples of Elizabeth Sawyer and Elizabeth Clarke, this pamphlet's emphasis on the witch's sexual arousal should perhaps be read as a further demonization of an apparently immoral and sinful witch. Unlike these earlier witches, however, Temperance's description of her Devil

[98] Temperance Lloyd was also known as Temperance Floyd and Mary Trembles was also known as Mary Floyd. Anon., *A true and impartial relation of the informations against three witches* (London: Printed by Freeman Collins, 1682); Anon., *The tryal, condemnation, and execution of three witches* (London: Printed for J. Deacon, 1682); Anon., *The life and conversation of Temperance Floyd, Mary Lloyd and Susanna Edwards* (London: Printed by J.W., 1687).

[99] Anon., *The tryal, condemnation, and execution of three witches*, p. 4.

[100] John Sadler, *The Sicke Woman's Private Looking Glass* (London: Printed by Ph. Stephens and Ch: Meradith, 1636), p. 119. This passage has been translated from its original Latin.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Anon., *The tryal, condemnation, and execution of three witches*, p. 4.

echoes the unnaturalness of her encounter. She describes the Devil as a black man 'about the length of her arm: and that his eyes were very big; and that he hopt or leapt in the way before her'.[103] This disturbing description represents a shift from Elizabeth Clarke's description in the 1640s of her Devil as a 'proper gentleman'.[104] Despite these physical differences, both Elizabeth and Temperance are portrayed as enjoying intercourse with the Devil.

Conclusion

This essay has argued that pamphlets presented English witchcraft as diabolical and highly sexualized. Nearly 50 per cent of all surviving pamphlets published in England during the seventeenth century depicted witches as sexual beings who sought out and enjoyed pleasurable sexual relationships with devils. These witches were believed to engage not just in intercourse, but also in illicit sexual practices such as fornication, cunnilingus and anilingus. The combination of illicit female sexuality with demonic power was instrumental in constructing the English witch as sinful, diabolical and highly sexualized. The female witch's illicit sexuality was, for many pamphleteers, inherently tied to her links with the Devil. Through describing a witch's ability to fall pregnant to the Devil, her desire for sexual intercourse or illicit sexual acts with devils and the pleasure she took in these interactions, pamphleteers helped to create a genre of pamphlet literature that portrayed witches as powerful, sexually deviant, supernatural beings whose deviancy was inherently tied with diabolism. This reading of all extant popular witchcraft pamphlets forces us to readjust our ideas on the fundamental nature of English witchcraft and suggests that many English witches were viewed in print as sexually deviant, diabolical women who took pleasure in sleeping with devils.

[103] Anon., *A true and impartial relations*, p. 15.

[104] Anon., *A true and exact relation of the several informations*, p. 2.